

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Howard School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2002-2003**

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Dates of On Site Visit: January 27th & 28th, 2003

Date of Report: February 2, 2003

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Maintenance	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Child Find and Screening Articles
- Screening Activities and Results

- Comprehensive Plan
- Parent Survey
- State Data Forms – A,B,C,D,E,F, G & H
- TAT Documentation
- Pre-referral forms
- IEP's
- Prairie Lakes Educational Cooperative Handbook
- SIMS Report
- Training/Personnel Records

Meets requirements

The Howard School District follows general supervision structures that are in alignment with their comprehensive plan and professional development. The district policies are in place and are consistent with Office of Special Education standards. The district participates in child find and screening activities to identify students with special needs. The district has policies and procedures in place for the following: placement of students out of district and suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities. Suspension, expulsion and drop out data are reported according to the state regulations.

The district has in place a system for monitoring student progress towards the state's performance goals.

The steering committee indicated that all staff is certified according to state standards and professional development opportunities are made available.

Validation Results

Promising practices

The monitoring team noted that the Howard School District was utilizing Teacher Assistance Teams at all grade levels in meeting students needs and assisting in the referral process for students with disabilities. The monitoring team identified this as a promising practice for the school district.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated the steering committees findings in the “meets requirements” category.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Data Tables B,C,E,F,K,L,M & N
- Child Find Screening Data and Records

- Budget Data
- Surveys
- Student Referral Data
- Professional Development Records
- Personnel Training
- Comprehensive Plan

Meets requirements

The Howard School District has policies and procedures in place to provide students with a free and appropriate public education. The school district provides special services to children birth to age twenty-one. Annual preschool screenings are provided for children birth to age five. The school district has general expulsion and suspension procedures in place and data indicates that there have been no suspension or expulsion of students with disabilities for more than ten days through out the school year. The district has provided training to administrators on the policies and procedures regarding the suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team was in agreement with the items listed in the “meets requirements area”.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Comprehensive Plan
 State Data Table G,H,I,J
 Teacher File Reviews
 Surveys
 TAT Information
 Referral Data
 Parent & Teacher Report Forms
 IEPs
 Consent to Evaluate
 Evaluation Data
 Student Records
 SIMS Report

Meets requirements

Appropriate evaluation procedures are in place for the Howard School District. The district’s evaluation procedures include the following: comprehensive evaluation, the use of valid tests, tests that are administered by trained personnel, and appropriate tests given. The district follows the policies and

procedures according to state and federal regulations. The students are evaluated in all areas of suspected disability and referral data considered. According to file reviews and parent surveys the IEP team considers all evaluation data to determine the student's disability category. The district utilizes state eligibility testing procedures to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

Needs improvement

Through student file review the steering committee indicated that 83% of the parents had input into the evaluation planning process. Proper evaluation and reevaluation procedures were followed in 92% of the files reviewed. Through file review and parent surveys the steering committee indicated that not all documentation of evaluation summaries had been provided to the parents.

Out of compliance

Functional based assessment was completed and linked to the student's IEP in 17% of the files reviewed.

Validation Results

Meets requirement

The steering committee had indicated that the district utilized testing procedures in accordance with the state and federal regulations. Through on-site review and file review the monitoring team could not validate that proper evaluation procedures were followed concerning the following: parent input into planning of evaluations, functional evaluation, transition assessment and prior notice for consent to evaluate.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team moved the items listed in the "needs improvement category" to the "out of compliance category". Through file review and the steering committee data it was evident that there was no system in place to address parent input into planning of evaluations or obtaining summary information for functional assessments.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:30:17 Prior Notice Consent to Evaluate

The review team identified five files where prior notice for consent to evaluate did not include consent for transition or functional assessment.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

The comprehensive evaluation must include functional evaluation. The monitoring team was in agreement with the steering committee that functional evaluation was not being utilized as part of the evaluation process. Functional evaluation was not included as part of the assessment process in seven out of ten files. When functional assessment was utilized there was no evaluation summary report provided to the parents or linkage of functional data to the present levels of performance in the IEP.

Transition evaluation needs to be completed by age 16 in order to develop a set of coordinated post secondary activities, based on assessment data. Through student file review it was validated that 40% of the transition age students lacked assessment data.

There is no documentation that the parents are provided with the opportunity to be involved in the planning of student evaluations; this was validated through student file review.

Issues Requiring Immediate Attention:**ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures**

In one student file review it was identified that the student was placed on the child count and did not qualify according to the state eligibility criteria. The student was placed on the 2001 Child Count in the 510 category and based on assessment data did not qualify for special services.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards
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Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Table L and M
- Surveys
- Parental Rights Document
- Teacher File Reviews C
- Comprehensive Plan
- Consent and Prior Notice Forms
- FERPA Disclosure
- Public Awareness Information
- State Surrogate Parent Document
- Special Education Handbook
- Student Files

Meets requirements

The steering committee indicated that through file review and parent survey it was evident that the district informed parents of their parental rights. The district has training, policies and procedures for surrogate parents. The district has policies and procedures ensuring that parents fully understand what activity consent is being given. The district's policies and procedures provides all parents the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning their child in the provision of a free and appropriate public education and FERPA. The district has policies and procedures to address complaint issues. The district adheres to the federal, state, and local policies and procedures regarding requests for due process hearings.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team was in agreement with the statements in the meets requirements category.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Student Progress Data
- Budget Information
- Student File Reviews
- Personnel Training
- State Data Table K & N
- Report Form
- Surveys
- Special Education Handbook

Promising practices

The district shows promising practices in their collaboration of general and special education teachers for growth of individual students.

Meets requirements

The district has policies and procedures in place for the development of the students IEP. The district makes provisions to have an appropriate IEP team. In reviewing student files the steering committee indicated that IEP procedures were being followed in most cases. The district provides the parents or guardians with prior notice for meetings. The prior notice contains the required content.

Needs improvement

The steering committee reviewed twenty-four student files, which indicated a 96% compliance rate in the following areas: writing measurable annual goals, documentation of modifications and accommodations for students on individual program plans and progress reports.

Out of compliance

Through student file review the steering committee indicated that functional evaluation was not being utilized to develop the present level of performance and the development of goals and objectives. The committee also stated that a high percentage of students did not have a coordinated set of activities listed to prepare them for post school activities. The required transition data was not present in 30% of the files reviewed by the steering committee.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team views the collaboration of general education and special education teachers as a strength, and necessary to meet the requirements of IDEA. For this reason, the team views teacher collaboration as a “meets requirements” activity.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team is in agreement with items listed under the “meets requirements category” and has added the collaboration of general and special education teachers in meeting student needs.

Needs improvement

The review team was in agreement with the items listed in the “needs improvement category”.

Out of compliance**ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of IEP**

The monitoring team was in agreement with the steering committee statements made in regards to the development of present levels of performance. Through student file review it was noted that the present level of performance was not linked to functional assessment. The present level did not always include the student’s strengths and weaknesses in relationship to the student’s disability. There was no present level of performance identified in relationship to transition activities and goals.

ARSD 24:05:27:01:01 Transition Service

The course of study for transition age students did not indicate specific courses for electives and the long term outcome for independent living and employment was not always in place by age 14. The transition activity page of the IEP did not indicate the staff responsible for over seeing the completion of the transition activities. The initiation and duration date was not stated for the transition activities.

Transition services are to be a coordinated set of activities, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities. These activities must be based on the individual student’s needs and takes into account the student’s preferences, interests and assessment data. Through file review, the monitoring team found six files, where transition evaluation was not considered or administered in order to design an outcome oriented process based on the student’s needs, preferences and interests. Based on the documentation found, the monitoring team determined this to be an area out of compliance for the district.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment
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After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Student File Reviews
- State Data Tables E,G,I,J,F, and N
- Surveys

Meets Requirements

The school district has policies and procedures in place for providing services to students in the least restrictive environment. Behavioral intervention plans have been written for students based on their individual education program.

Needs improvement

Inclusionary practices for preschool students need to be expanded.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team was in agreement with the statements made in the “meets requirements category”.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team was in agreement with the statements made in the “needs improvement category”.